10: d'Orleans--267 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 226, 516

"Below Muong-Ngoi the river widens to 100 or 150 yards in breadth. In the narrower places some fishing traps have been erected: some bundles of three posts each are tied together at the top forming a faggot, in the centre is a basket full of stones, their weight keeping them in place. Between one bundle and the next a triangular net is placed, point in front; a man raises it by means of a long pole, which acts as a lever; when at work the fisherman squats, head downwards, upon a small terrace formed of bamboos. Several have covered their heads with a red veil, and their position reminds me of Mussulmans at their prayers. Here they are watching the water, and when a fish is caught they suddenly raise the net. I have sometimes counted seven or eight terraces across the river."

10: d'Orleans--322-325 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 226, 228, 255, 439

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "A good deal of net fishing goes on in the river itself, but it is not till later in the season that the prabeuc, a fish resembling the sturgeon, is caught. At fixed [pages 323 and 324 contain illustration] [325] periods, this fish ascends the river as far as the confluent of the Nam Ou, and its capture is a source of great profit for the inhabitants, as its eggs (which make excellent caviar when fresh) are sent as far as Xieng Mai, while the fish itself is canned and isinglass is obtained from its skin."

10: d'Orleans--369 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 226, 782

"After leaving Muong Liep we camp at the right of the river near a sand-bahk covered with the remains of former encampments. A hundred paces off is a large pond some 150 feet broad and of considerable length. It owes its name to its green waters nong kiou (green pond). In the month of February people come from all directions, and even from Luang Prabang, to camp on its edge and to fish. Many big fish are caught here, but now, we are told, they are in a cavern which extends under the sand-bank. I do not know how true this may be, but it is certain that in walking on the sand and striking it, a hollow sound is heard. Before fishing two bullocks are sacrificed to the dragon of the lake, and tchoum-tchoum is drunk.

When we talk of fishing ourselves with dynamite our boatmen dissuade us: 'they cannot dive because of the dragon.' "

23: Franck--297-298 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 226, 501, 526

"Huge fish are caught in the Mekong, weighing a hundred and fifty, two hundred, sometimes even two hundred and fifty--not pounds, but kilograms, fish so big that it takes ten men to carry one of them and one man to carry a severed head. It is easy to understand what the flap of such a fish-tail sometimes means to the fishermen in their frail vine-tied canoes. But it is just the fishing for such a people in such a climate; for every time they catch a fish they can--and usually do--[298] rest for a week without going hungry. Racing pirogues as much as twenty paces long lie bottom up on bamboo-horses under little thatch roofs here and there upon the high weed-grown river-bank at the edge of the capital, being used only in November during the annual regattas. For rowing--more exactly paddling--is the athletic sport of Luang Prabang."

133 vast impenetrable forests and "the traveler sees only tall grass or
137 gigantic trees intertwined with lianas, then all at once, through a break in the foliage, he discovers the cascades of a river. This is the only noise to interrupt the impressive silence of these great forests" (2).

2. L. de Reinach, Le Laos, 1911.

133 Set against the huge mountain masses of Yunnan, this tormented region has always been the natural refuge of peoples driven out of India or China by famine, great invasions or religious discord, and its orography explains, in large measure, the multiplicity of tiny
/631/ states which were formed there throughout the ages. Its abrupt defiles radiate out and, so to speak, become calmed in the valleys of the Ménam, the Mékong and the Red River, and its principal substructure spreads out /5/ and ends in a vast plateau known as the plateau of Tran-Ninh, whose hillocks are planted with pine trees and drop suddenly from east to west.

In the southeast, however, the Tran-Ninh plateau clings "like an excrescence" to a long artery known as the Annamitic Chain which forms a distinct line of demarcation between Laos and Annam. This chain runs parallel to the coast in a northwest-southeast direction, and its peaks go all the way down to the Mékong by successive stages, first forming plateaus or folds of ground covered with thick forests (dông in Laotian), then slighter undulations where there are forest glades (khok in Laotian), and finally vast ricefields ending in the river.

The Mékong. This great river frontier which, over 800 kilometers of its length, marks the political separation of French Indo-China from the kingdom of Siam, gives life to Laos, together with its tributaries, "as the Nile constitutes Egypt." It fertilizes it with
● /226/ its alluvia, feeds the native with its fish and guarantees transport for
/505/ his rafts and pirogues from north to south. But this liquid highway where nature seems to have taken pleasure in piling up obstacles and which is cut by numerous rapids and barred by waterfalls, can not be
/502/ /6/ regarded as usable for regular navigation over all of its length.

133 Fed by the melting snows of Tibet, the Mékong enters Laos through a capricious gorge, widens for a moment in the alluvia of an old lake basin and narrows again towards Luang-Prabang. Grandiose surroundings framed by the blue line of the far-off peaks give it what

Ox hides	58 to 65 francs per 100 kilograms
Bones of tigers and other cats	58 to 75 " " " "
Pelts of tigers, panthers and other large cats	3 francs to 12 francs and 50 centimes apiece
Anteater scales (without the skin)	50 to 72 francs per 100 kilograms
Anteater hides (with scales)	46 to 50 " " " "
Skins of various monkeys	83 to 88 " " " "
Tortoise shells	37 francs and 50 centimes per 100 kilograms.

Fishing, preserved fish

Laos, with its extensive hydrological network and its watercourses of all sizes, is a fishing land par excellence. We have already noted the chief varieties of fish which populate its rivers, and have seen that most of them are represented by large-sized specimens.

Since the produce of fishing makes a considerable contribution to the food supply of the inhabitants, it has been necessary to create devices and combine various means for capturing this prey.

The methods, primitive at first, have been increasingly perfected, and each one has been modified so that it is adapted to some particular feature either of the watercourses or of the fish.

The devices used today are wholly made by the inhabitants. They vary greatly in form and--the fact is worth noting--are much like those used in Europe. Indeed, the floating line is common, but in its most rudimentary form, with a thorn for a hook and then the ground-line and long-line. There are also nets in great abundance, and they are identical with the ones found among our fishermen. The most common ones are the seine, the cast-net, the square dipping-net, the shrimping-net, the hoop-net, the landing-net and the large trammel. All this equipment is supplemented with bottles, [350] single and double bow-nets and traps. The Laotians also build large barrages across watercourses and provide them with corridors leading to bow-nets or hoop-nets.

Hiding places in the form of fixed huts on the watercourses are used for spear fishing. A light in these huts attracts the fish and the native, who is armed with a hardwood fork, spears it as soon as it comes within range. [Illustration here]

A few varieties of fish in the Mekong go down to the sea at certain periods, then return to the great river and go up it for more than two thousand kilometers to an altitude of four hundred meters. Enormous rays are caught which are as much as four meters long from head to tail, and fish similar to the whiting, the mackerel, the sardine, the tuna, the sole and the limanda are found, almost all of which have retained a sea fish taste despite the distance.

The kings of the Mekong, in respect to size and weight, are the Pa-Beuk, [351] the Pa-Leum, the Pa-Sa-Ho, the Pa-Kheung, the Pa-Kai and the Pa-Khoun, which vary in weight from 35 to 200 kilograms. The Pa-Beuk and the Pa-Leum have characteristic habits, in that the first of these works its way up to points between Vien-Tiane at Luang-Prabang at a distance of 2,000 kilometers from the sea, and the second comes up beyond Xieng-Khang, or more than 2,600 kilometers upriver. The two points on the Mekong where, from the middle of February to the middle of March, the Pa-Beuk gather at [Illustration here] spawning time are, first, a point slightly downstream from Ban-Sam-Pan-Na (above Vien-Tiane), exactly at the Keng-Hang, and, second, a little below Pak-Lay at the Nong-Keo. These spots, where the fish choose to stay, are depressions in the rocky bed of the river, generally between small islands, where there are still 18 to 25 meters of water at low water time.

Hundreds of pirogues gather in these regions (1) and within [352]

(1) On the Lower Mekong the "Pa-Phon" (alosa) is fished for in the same way as it goes upriver (January) and downriver (October).

a few days the fishermen take a great number of Pa-Beuk weighing, on the average, from 120 to 200 kilograms. The number of fish caught varies from year to year, sometimes doubling from one year to the next. In the last few years the average has been between 60 and 130 Pa-Beuk, representing approximately 12 to 25 tons of fish. They may be eaten fresh or preserved.

The meat of the Pa-Beuk is separated into slices in the form of long strips which are put out to dry in the sun. Its eggs, which form two enormous masses weighing nearly ten kilograms, are used to make a kind of caviar which is highly esteemed in the land.

The meat of the other large varieties of fish is used to make various preserves, the chief of which are:

"Pa-Ka-Deng," composed of medium-sized or small fish which have been salted, dried and smoked.

"Pa-Niang," formed of slices from a large fish which have been smoked. 226

"Pa-Heng," or a small dried fish. 262

"Pa-Khem" corresponds fairly closely to our salted and dried fish of the sardine type known as Nantes, which are left in salt for only a few days.

Finally, "Pa-Dek" is the form in which most of the large varieties of fish are preserved, and is an almost indispensable part of the native food supply. To prepare Pa-Dek the meat is cut into small pieces and ground in a mortar with salt and pepper so as to produce a kind of paste which is then put in jars with salt. The resulting brine helps to preserve the product (1). 263

(1) The price of Pa-Dek varies between 18 and 25 francs per hundred kilograms. This is the "Mam" of the Annamites.

The price of fish is subject to fluctuations, depending on the scarcity of it. The large fish of which we have just been speaking sell at prices between one and forty francs, depending on their weight and their abundance on the market. 226 435

Eels, shrimp of the prawn type and crabs are also found in the ponds and rivers of Laos during the rainy season, and in the water-courses there are various edible shellfish [353] such as the river mussel and small winkle. The ponds and swamps shelter several varieties of frogs, some of which reach an enormous size. All of them are edible, and are caught with a red ribbon on the end of a line fastened to a long bamboo pole. 226 [227]

II

PRESENT-DAY CROPS

Together with an enumeration of the crops grown in Laos we should like to be able to give the area which each occupies and the cultivable surfaces with the nature of the soil and the type of crops which would be suited to them, but as the Superior Resident states in his report for 1899: 241 311

"We have been in the colony for too short a time to have been able to set up a cadastral registry service. In view of the large area of the territory (267,000 square kilometers), the small and sparse population which inhabits it (2,7 inhabitants per square kilometer in

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leafage, and arrange them in bundles. In the evening everyone returns in a procession to the town, and the wood which has been gathered is put out to dry in the courtyard of the pagoda. A month later, the wood is ready to burn, and another feast takes place at the pagoda. The day before all the women assemble to prepare the offerings of food for the bonzes. They take the wood cut the previous month to cook the ball of rice as big as one's fist on which oil and the contents of an egg are poured so as to form a light surrounding crust. The old people take advantage of this wood- [71] cutting and of its burning to hear additional sermons. The Hit Sip Song Khong Sip Si tell a legend of the origin of this feast, which takes place in memory of an old woman who met a bonze while going to gather wood in the forest. She offered him a ball of rice on which lay an egg. After having done this charitable deed, she was bitten by a snake and died. Since that day the Khao Chi is celebrated.

[773]

[72] ANNUAL RITES OF THE FISHING OF THE PA BEUK

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Every five years the fishing of the pa beuk takes place in five different places. This fish, belonging to the Siluridae family, has a long smooth silvery-white body, without any scales and may attain a weight of 200 kilograms. The five places are Ang (about 25 kilometers upstream from Vientiane) from the 13th to the 15th day of the crescent moon of the 3rd Laotian month, between January and February; at Luang Prabang (in the middle of the river opposite the town) from the 6th to the 7th Laotian months between May and June; at Nong Khieu (about 22 kilometers upstream from Paklay) on the 15th day of the crescent moon of the 3rd Laotian month (February); at Nong Theo (about 30 kilometers upstream from Paklay) between the 4th and 5th Laotian months, without any fixed date; at Ban Seo (about 27 kilometers upstream from Houei Sai) from the 6th to the 7th Laotian month, between May and June.

In the section of the river at Vientiane, as early as the 9th day of the crescent moon, the Chao Muong of the province or his representative leaves the capital to organize the festival. He goes by small stages in a dugout as far as Ang, a sort of wide cove or creek favorable to pa beuk fishing. First the Chao Muong and his retinue stop at Ban Si Khay, "village of the lower orders" ["village de la crasse" may have the above meaning or it may mean "village of filth"--Translator] where lives the village genie who has a wide reputation, and who is continually worshipped by the sorcerers living to the north of the

226 village. At the foot of the tree which is supposed to contain the
[182] dwelling of the genie, there is an altar about two meters high. Here,
the Chao Muong, surrounded by all the fishermen, places five roasted
527 chickens, two bottles of [73] rice alcohol, six coconuts, some betel
leaves, some areca nuts, some cakes, some small sticks of incense,
some beeswax candles. These he offers to the genie, asking him to
intervene in his favor so that the fishing this year be fruitful.

787 The genie is addressed by the intermediary of one of the village
527 sorceresses. As soon as she is "possessed" by the genie, she goes into
226 a trance. She is then unconscious of what is happening around her
and the genie answers through her mouth to the questions asked of her
by the fishermen. Invariably the genie's answer is the same: the
catch will be fruitful if traditions peculiar to the fishing of the pa beuk
are followed. The possessed woman, surrounded by a circle of fisher-
men, is at first standing up and is holding a cup in which are flowers,
292 small sticks of incense, and ten beeswax candles. Her hands begin to
tremble when the genie enters into her; she then sets the cup down at
her feet, and, on top of her own clothes, puts on those of the fishermen
who present her with them on a tray for the sacrifice: an ordinary
sin, a cotton shirt dyed red, a belt and a turban also of cotton dyed
red to which are added a metallic piaster, and two yards [brasse]
of white cotton cloth for her personal use. After turning all around,
she squats down, her bust moving in a gyrating motion, and from
this moment she speaks in the name of the genie.

On the 10th day of the crescent moon the Chao Muong and the
preachers arrive at Kao Lieu, "the nine windings" of the Mekong,
where there is a very famous genie who is much more powerful than
that of Ban Si Khay. Forming a large procession, they fetch the
village sorceress with parasols, lances, swords and gongs. Piled high
on an offering tray are nine bars of silver, two kilograms of beeswax,
ten candles, four coconuts, some betel leaves, some areca nuts,
[74] a metal piaster, two yards [brasse] of white cloth, a raw hen's
egg, a bottle of rice alcohol. The procession returns with the sorcer-
ess to the front of the altars which are regular houses, and everyone
settles down in them. The entrance is to the west, that is, opposite
[182] the town. The offerings for the genie are four times greater than at
Ban Si Khay as each altar receives nine roast chickens, nine bars of
silver, four coconuts, some areca, some betel, candles, small
sticks of incense. In addition, every three years, a buffalo is sacri-
ficed, and in the years between, a pig. There are the same questions
and the same answers as at Ban Si Khay.

173: Deydier--48 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

In the night of the 11th to 12th day of the crescent moon, the stop is at Hat Hin Siou where some offerings are made to the local genie: two coconuts, two chickens, etc., with the request that he be favorable to the fishing. There are two more stops before arriving at Ang which must be reached on the 12th day of the crescent moon, at eight o'clock in the morning. In the evening all the fishermen go to the village to question the sorceress. There is no procession, but the same gifts as at Ban Si Khay; same questions, same answers. On the 13th day, at seven in the morning, they go to the altar of the genie with offerings to invite him to come and live in the temporary shelter which has been erected on the sandbank at Ang, north of the village, and to beg him to favor the fishing. The whole procession then goes toward the temporary altar and deposits its offerings.

On the 13th day of the crescent moon, the fishing starts at the precise moment when the moon disappears behind the mountain, that is at about four o'clock in the morning.

The gong is struck and immediately the 384 fishing dugouts go into the harbor. Each dugout is decorated with leafy branches, with seven untwisted cotton threads and with a bottle of rice alcohol, and is occupied by two fishermen. They throw a net measuring three meters in width and six meters in length which sinks down to a depth of [75] 35 brasses [70 meters] by means of lead sinkers. The first fish caught is offered to the genie. It is laid gently on its side, its head turned towards the rising sun, its tail lifted towards the setting sun. Some flowers are laid on its cheek and sprinkled with alcohol, while the master of ceremonies says: "The moment of celebrating the feast of Ang, which is your feast, has arrived. The ritual offerings have been made to you. To bring this feast to a happy close we beg you to give the fishermen pa beuk in great quantities."

The fish is then killed with a pointed bamboo which is sunk between the fish's eyes. It is then divided in two. The prepared liver is offered to the genie after it has been fixed in various ways according to ritual recipes, while candles and small sticks of incense decorate the nine offering trays each of which bears the bowl of food.